

ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

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OFFICE of the ARCHBISHOP

DECREE

OF THE RELEGATION OF

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE

Holy Trinity Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania has been designated as a church for worship by Old Saint Mary Parish in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania since July 1, 2009. Old Saint Mary Parish has not found it necessary to use Holy Trinity Church, and it is believed that the costs of maintaining, restoring and repairing Holy Trinity Church so as to render it functional would significantly weaken and impede the future financial viability of Old Saint Mary Parish. Consideration, therefore, must be given as to whether sufficient grave causes exist for the relegation of Holy Trinity Church to profane but not sordid use.

The following grave causes suggest that Holy Trinity Church be so relegated and no longer be used for divine worship:

- 1) On July 1, 2009, Holy Trinity Parish, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania merged with Old Saint Mary Parish, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Between 2009 and 2017, non-solemnity holy day Masses were celebrated in Holy Trinity Church. The church also served as a location for Masses celebrated in the Extraordinary Form between July 2013 and May 2015. In the spring of 2017, all religious services were discontinued due to both the deteriorating flooring and the overall deteriorating physical condition of the church. No religious services have been held there since, and no situation in the parish has arisen during the intervening five-year period that would have required the use of this Church;
- 2) Holy Trinity Church is located only two city blocks from Old Saint Mary Church. There does not exist an undue burden for the faithful to come to Old Saint Mary Church to worship;
- 3) Holy Trinity Church was previously relegated to profane but not sordid use in a Decree issued in July 2019. While that Decree was ultimately revoked by a later Decree issued in April 2020, the reasons that prompted the initial Decree of relegation still remain valid, and in fact those reasons supporting relegation have only strengthened since that time;

- 4) The decision to once again seek relegation of Holy Trinity Church to profane but not sordid use was recently made known to the Old Saint Mary Parish community-at-large and no major objections emerged. In fact, many parishioners expressed their support for relegation, as they see it as beneficial and necessary to the continued stability of Old Saint Mary Parish;
- 5) Holy Trinity Church needs serious repair and restoration work performed in order to be functional again, and the spending of significant amounts of parish resources to accomplish that work would not be financially responsible and would negatively impact the sustained financial well-being of Old Saint Mary Parish. At the present time, the annual maintenance costs for Holy Trinity Church approximate \$4,000-\$5,000. More significantly, in the winter and spring of 2022, Old Saint Mary Parish had various estimates done in order to better learn what the necessary costs of repairing and restoring Holy Trinity Church to a functional worship space would potentially be. A roofing estimate was done, and it was determined that the replacement of the existing roof would cost Old Saint Mary Parish upwards of \$378,000. An estimate to remove the non-functioning current flooring and replace it with new flooring was also done, and these costs would exceed \$75,000. An assessment of and estimate for the church's electrical system was also performed; it was recommended that the electrical system for the church be entirely replaced, and the costs of this entire project were estimated to be just under \$60,000. Finally, an estimate was performed in order to know what the potential costs of installing a new boiler and heating system for the church would be, and this estimate stated that such costs would be just under \$230,000. Based on these estimates alone, the needed repair and restoration costs of Holy Trinity Church would be just under \$750,000, and this amount does not factor in the anticipated higher costs of these projects that would likely have now occurred with the passage of time. While Old Saint Mary Parish could theoretically afford the restoration and repair of Holy Trinity Church, this would be a financially imprudent use of the parish's funds, given the fact that Holy Trinity Church has not been used for over five years and given the fact that Old Saint Mary Church has not required the use of Holy Trinity Church. It is also to be noted that in each of the last three years, Old Saint Mary Parish has experienced annual operating losses of a combined amount totaling just under \$120,000. It is reasonable to assume that these operating losses will continue to occur, and so the parish's financial reserves would be more prudently used towards preserving the vitality of Old Saint Mary Parish as a whole. Significantly depleting the parish's funds for the repair and restoration of a second, unused church is not financially prudent, especially considering that Old Saint Mary Church continually needs to be maintained in good order. The allocation of such vast amounts of money for the repair and restoration of Holy Trinity Church would be a poor example of financial stewardship as regards the Faithful of Old Saint Mary Parish;
- 6) Having all of the parishioners continue to worship at Old Saint Mary Church will continue to enhance parish unity and help parishioners focus on the future of the parish.

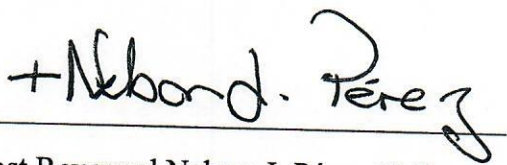
On the other hand, the Holy Trinity Church building has significant historical value, as it is the third Catholic church built in the City of Philadelphia, and it was the church of the first national parish in the country, serving the Germans. Its exterior is historically designated and cannot be

altered without the approval of the historical commission of the City of Philadelphia. If the church were to be relegated to profane but not sordid use, it can possibly be sold, and at this time there exists a well-founded hope that the building can be repurposed by a potential buyer in such a way that honors both its sacred and ethnic history.

Due to the existence of all of these reasons as outlined above, in virtue of the prescripts of canon 1212 and canon 1222 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, having judged that sufficient grave causes are present and that the good of souls will not thereby be impaired, and having consulted with the Council of Priests on September 8, 2022, I hereby **DECREE** that Holy Trinity Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, be relegated to profane but not sordid use.

This Decree is effective as of January 23, 2023 and is to be communicated to the members of Old Saint Mary Parish and to the faithful of the Archdiocese in an appropriate manner. Canonical recourse to this Decree is to be sought according to the norms of canon law. All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

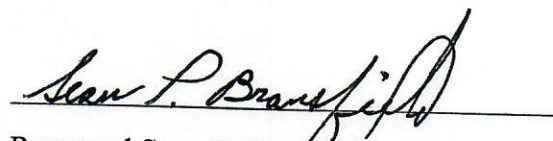
Given at the Curia of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, on the 9th day of December, in the Year of Our Lord 2022.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nelson J. Pérez", written over a horizontal line.

Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez, D.D.

Archbishop of Philadelphia

SEAL

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sean P. Bransfield", written over a horizontal line.

Reverend Sean P. Bransfield

Chancellor